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On A Request to Write About the Practical Application of Biblical Studies

ALUMNI/AE FOCUS

by Judith Dancy, ESR '93

There is just a touch of irony in my answering this request. Few entering seminary have been less biblically astute than I was in 1989. Not only was I ignorant of much of what the Bible contains, I was more than moderately phobic. I had become God's woman in a series of those mischievous ways God is so fond of. God had searched me out, found me and claimed me within human relationship. Outside of scripture. I had been brought to the Earlham School of Religion to fulfill God's purposes, which as yet had not been made known to me.

That I would be required to become at least modestly conversant with scripture did not occur to me as I sold belongings and kissed friends and family goodbye. The vision of study that I took with me to Richmond was of sitting with other seekers at the feet of learned teachers, talking about God.

It wasn't exactly like that.

All those learned teachers expected more than God-talk. Those polysyllabic words I thought Tom Mullen had made up to scare us on Orientation Day were real. They were meant to become a part not only of my vocabulary, but also of my comprehension. Teachers taught. Fellow students learned. I panicked. To no avail.

The biblical requirements were there, and as long as I was there too, the Bible was going to be taught to me. Liking it or not was my own choice, but I was going to sit in those classes if I intended to graduate.

So I did. Thank God.

I even came to be less afraid of the Bible, more aware of its mystery with each class. It was not until just before graduation, however, that I came to own my own purpose for learning the Bible and learning about the Bible.

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It was a tiny incident, probably quickly forgotten by the family who triggered it. On the eve of their mother's 90th birthday, someone in the family remembered the promise of three score and ten years "somewhere in the Bible." They called me, their pastor, to find the passage. At first I was embarrassed that I couldn't quote chapter and verse, but then I remembered, "I know how to look it up!" A less than five minute word search gave me what I needed. When I called them back

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TEACHING PEACE continued from page 1.

this family's satisfaction for having the text was disproportionate to the time it took for me to find the answer. Unless we add to that five minutes the four years of teaching and learning that prepared me for it.

Aha! After all the struggle of study, it was that flash that was my final seminary teacher. The biblical studies were not for them: Nancy and Judith and Alan and Tom, nor for the other teachers whose subjects became clearer to me as I grew more familiar with the Bible. This was for me.

Over the last seven years that flash has become a more constant light, one that lets the Bible teach me even when I'm not trying to learn. In my most difficult moments, my mother's death, the discordance of Friends on the occasion of the recording of my gifts of ministry, the death of a beloved friend, the call to minister to others whose fear and hurt are both deep and immediate, I have been strengthened by the unveiling of scripture that began in those required biblical studies at ESR. There has also been real joy in teaching others to see that what once looked like immutable cement blocks of words and meaning are more truly shimmering layers that need to pass through the human heart before comprehension can begin.

As I have come to understand the Bible as God's love song, and to teach it in that way, it seems that others are finding deeper relationship with God and one another. My favorite comment from a Bible study member came late in my second year at Winston-Salem Friends. We were about to finish Matthew's gospel, which we'd been studying for 18 months. A year and a half! In comic disgust this precious woman looked at me and said, "I used to think I understood the Bible until you came along and messed me up!"

That may just be the best compliment I've ever received, and I'll pass it right along to those teachers at ESR who came along and "messed me up." And I'll add a note of gratitude, too. Thanks for messing me up. It's been really useful!

Judith Tyler Dancy, a ESR 1993 graduate, lives in North Carolina, where she is the pastor of Winston-Salem Friends Meeting.



The Bible, God and Life

FACULTY FOCUS

by Nancy Bowen, Associate Professor of Old Testament

When people ask me why I decided to study the Old Testament I semi-facetiously answer that it's because of the sex and violence! Okay, so there are some tantalizing tales in the Old Testament that might make parts of it worth reading, but really, why should anyone want to study the Old Testament—or even the New Testament for that matter.

The deeper truth behind the remark about sex and violence is that there is an earthiness and reality to the Old Testament that appeals to me. And it appeals to me because it reflects my experience of both life and God. Life is messy in the world of the Old Testament. That's certainly been my experience of the world. Human relationships

aren't always neat and tidy. Even God is messy in the Old Testament. God is loving, forgiving, merciful, and gracious as well as jealous, judging, deceitful, and forgetful. There are tensions to the way God is portrayed that cannot finally be resolved. And that's also been my experience of God. My relationship with God isn't always neat and tidy either.

Another way of saying this is that the Bible provides for us a "mirror of identity." When I am attentive to Scripture, when I read and study and meditate, I discover indications of who I am: a creation of the Creator who is everlastingly loved by the Creator. I, more often than not, inflict damage on other of the Creator's creations and yet find that the Creator can transform the damage I have

done. I also discover indications of how I might live out my life in relation to God and to my brothers and sisters: to love God with all of myself and my neighbor as myself.

Apart from the question of *why* we should study the Bible is the question of *how* we should study the Bible. The short answer to that question is that there are many ways in which to engage the biblical text. Part of what happens in biblical courses at ESR and Bethany is introducing students to some of those many ways. At its best, biblical interpretation is a complex work that involves the head, the heart, the soul, and the Holy Spirit. One student recently compared the study and investigation of Scripture to the task of peeling an onion. There are multiple layers to inspect and observe in order to obtain further information in order to create a more complete understanding of a particular text. What this meant for him was that our searching for enlightenment and understanding must never end. Interpretation of the Bible is a task which is never completed.

Regardless of the particular methodology one uses, I tell my students that I have two favorite sayings (suitable for embroidery and framing) serving as principles that, for me, undergird any interpretation of the text.

The first saying is, "Context is Everything." Put simply, this says that a person's context influences interpretation. For example, I bring to the text the questions and concerns that arise from being white, female, single, heterosexual, upper middle class, and American. I also know that growing up in the desert, teaching at a Quaker seminary, and spending significant time in the middle East are parts of my context that influence my interpretation. My questions and concerns may not be the same as those of someone who is Asian, male, poor, Christian, and living in communist China. So that person will find different meaning in the text than I will. Therefore, it is important to listen to as many voices as possible in the process of interpretation.

I am a firm believer in the communal aspect of interpretation. If I listen only to my own voice I will miss some of the layers of the text.

The second saying is, "Interpretation Matters." In other words, interpretation of the Bible impacts peoples' lives. Here are some ways the interpretation of Genesis has had an impact.

- The control and exploitation of the earth without any criteria for limits to that control and exploitation has been based upon the command to humanity in Genesis 1:26, 28 to subdue the earth and have dominion over it.
- The prohibition against women having leadership roles in the church has been based upon interpretations of Genesis 2-3.
- U.S. support of black slavery was justified by interpretation of the "curse of Ham" in Genesis 9:24-27.
- The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa interpreted the tower of Babel story to show that race differences are biblical and that separation is God's will and therefore apartheid is biblically based.

On the other hand, the same Scripture has impacted people's lives in these ways.

- The story of the Exodus has provided the vision and motivation for the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement in the U.S., liberation movements in Latin America, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and the end of Soviet domination.
- Interpretation of Isaiah 2:2-4 and 11:1-9 brings the hope for beating swords into plowshares and the vision of a peaceable kingdom where the lion and the lamb live together.
- God's simultaneous creation of male and female (Genesis 1:27), Joel's hope that God's spirit will be poured out on sons and daughters (2:28-29; cp. Acts 2:1-21), and Paul's statement that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28) are interpreted to support women's leadership in ministry.
- The Quaker Peace Testimony is based upon interpretation of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

If interpretation matters, then I must attend to the way my interpretation impacts others. Do my words serve to hurt or to heal? This is another reason we must engage in interpretation with one another. I need to hear from you if my interpretation brings you freedom or leads you into bondage.

These are some of my thoughts regarding biblical studies. I look forward to hearing from you about yours.



Nancy Bowen

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INTERPRETATION IS
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Grounded in the Study of Scripture

STUDENT FOCUS

by Mark Tope

In II Timothy 3:16-17, the apostle Paul wrote, “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man [person; my insertion] of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” By saying this, Paul established the Word of God as the authority in his life. As a Hebrew, the Old Testament was the foundation of his life. As a Christian, the words of Jesus and the truth he received from the continuing revelation of the risen Savior comprised the cornerstone of his faith.

Paul’s words underscore why I believe the Earlham School of Religion, as a Christian seminary, has to ground itself in the study of scripture. For the Christian tradition, the Bible is recognized as the inspired word of God. For me, I see scripture as the authority and basis of my belief. As a student at ESR, if I, as a Christian, deviate from the scriptures as my authority, I feel I will lose that authority and core of my faith. If ESR, as a Christian seminary, names any other source as its authority, it has lost the center of its faith as well. When we begin naming other beliefs, philosophies and ideologies as the foundation of our inner being, we are no longer centered in the definitive Word of God that has guided the Christian church for the last two thousand years.

The primary problem I feel today’s religious community has is that there is no defined authority. There is, instead, scattered ideology. The result is a cafeteria-style religion, where one believes in a little of this and a little of that, but has nothing substantial on which to hang one’s theological hat.

George Fox recognized this in the church of his day. He read about the historic Jesus in the scriptures, but the established church of his time had no answers on how to meet this Savior personally. Where the church could not help, though, the Bible could. It has been said that no person has ever lived who knew the Bible as well as Fox. Because

of his study of scripture, George Fox encountered the indwelling presence of Christ which proved to be his liberation. With Fox’s example of using scripture as authority while relying on the indwelling presence of Christ as Guide, Quakers can move boldly into the twenty-first century with a fresh message of the presence of Jesus in our lives.

Biblical studies are important for ESR for they establish an authority we can ground our whole being in. As Paul testified, scripture is God-breathed. The experience of reading it allows the Holy Spirit to work in us and communicate to our inner being. Paul endorsed scripture as useful for teaching, as well as rebuking, correcting and training. The very reason for reading scripture is to immerse ourselves in the message it has for us.

All of us—students, faculty and staff—at Earlham School of Religion strive to make a difference in the world. We aspire to be productive in our lives and careers. How can we do this without a scriptural base?

Paul identifies scripture as being the inspiration that equips us for every good work.

When we begin naming other beliefs, philosophies and ideologies as the foundation of our inner being, we are no longer centered in the definitive Word of God that has guided the Christian church for the last two thousand years.

Without it, we stumble around in any “ism” and philosophy that happens down the avenue. Scripture grounds us in the one truth that will sustain us for the rest of our lives.

Mark Tope is a fourth year student at ESR. He lives in Plainfield, Indiana where he is the pastor of Plainfield Friends Meeting (Western Yearly Meeting).

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Phil Baisley (Assistant Professor of Pastoral Studies, ESR '93) traveled to Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region Yearly Meeting in Canton, Ohio, where he led some of the evening worship programs for children. Phil also attended Baltimore Yearly Meeting sessions and led a workshop on making meetings and churches a safe place for children. This workshop had to do with general safety issues, as well as protection from predatory persons.

Lonnie Valentine (Associate Professor of Peace and Justice Studies, ESR '83) participated in a forum addressing “War, Pacifism and Liberty” on September 7-10 at the Mountain Sky Guest Ranch in Emigrant, Montana. This forum was hosted by the Institute of Political Economy at Utah State University and underwritten by the Liberty Fund.

Stephanie Crumley Effinger (Director of Field Education and Student Services, ESR '81) gave the Quaker Lecture at Western Yearly Meeting. Her lecture was titled “Seeking to Be Faithful Friends of Jesus in a Multifaith America.” Stephanie also attended sessions of Indiana Yearly Meeting and Western Yearly Meeting. She went to the Quaker educators conference at Earlham College, where she served on two panels. She also wrote the commercial for Quaker silence which was presented as part of “The Quaker Home Companion” presentation at the conference.

Nancy Bowen (Associate Professor of Old Testament) travelled with a group of students to Israel/Palestine and Jordan for 2 weeks during the January intensive. Their trip was both educational and spiritual; visiting the Sea of Galilee, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. They also learned how the Bible and faith are a part of the current political situation as well. Tour members visited an Israeli settlement, a Palestinian refugee camp, the Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron, Sabeel Liberation Theology Center, and Ramallah Friends School. They also “floated” in the Dead Sea and shopped for gold in Jordan.

Stephanie Ford (Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Spirituality) gave a talk entitled “Evelyn Underhill: Mystic and Prophet” to the Gathering of Baptists and Others Interested in Spirituality at Mars Hill

College, in North Carolina in July. She also spoke on “Celebrating the Feminine Voice of Evelyn Underhill” at the Evelyn Underhill Day of Prayer at the National Cathedral, Washington, D.C., in June. In April she gave a presentation on “Spirituality in the Church,” in a series on the challenges the church faces at a new millennium. This was presented at First Baptist Church in Henderson, North Carolina. March saw her leading a retreats at Columbia Baptist Church in Virginia on “The Journey of Prayer” and at Cedar Cross Retreat Center in North Carolina on “Lent with Evelyn Underhill.”

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Jay Marshall (Dean) has been doing a good bit of speaking. So far in 2000 he has given the Carey Lecture at Baltimore Yearly Meeting on “Reclaiming the Concept and Practice of Universal Ministry,” been the keynote speaker at North Carolina Yearly Meeting (FUM), and led some Old Testament studies at New England Yearly Meeting on “What Kind of God is This?” He also conducted leadership workshops at Wilmington Yearly Meeting’s Pastor and Spouses Retreat and at Indiana Yearly Meeting. Jay has also spoken during worship at a number of Friends meetings, including South Marion Friends and Dublin in Indiana Yearly Meeting.

Brent Bill (Instructor in Religious Creative Writing, ESR '80) continues to lead “Amazing Grace: Literature and the Life of Faith Book Club” at Danner’s Bookstore in Muncie, Indiana. He also coordinated “Writing Indiana,” a series of readings and talking about writing with three Indiana authors. “Writing Indiana” was a program of the Friends of Muncie Public Library. Brent also organized “Good Writing: The Ministry of Writing,” a series of 5 writing workshops cosponsored by ESR and Quaker Hill Conference Center.

Comings and Goings

ESR FACULTY AND STAFF CHANGES



Phyllis Wetherell



Carmen Archer



Stephanie Crumley-Effinger



Stephanie Ford



Nancy Michaels

On Wednesday, April 26, 2000 the ESR community said good-bye to **Phyllis Wetherell** and crowned her “Queen of ESR.” Phyllis officially retired on June 30th. Since 1985 she had been the face and voice of the Earlham School of Religion. For those fifteen years she was the person to go to if you needed to know something or get something done. Her status was recognized with a coronation (complete with throne, scepter and crown) in the ESR Gathering Room. She was presented with gifts—silly and serious—to help her as she made the move to life in Maine. She was also honored at a reception on September 23rd. Phyllis was presented with gifts, including McDonald’s gift certificates and a check covering airfare and expenses for a trip to Scotland. Current students placed a permanent picnic table behind Barclay Center in her honor, as well.

Carmen Archer takes over the desk vacated by Phyllis. Charmelitta Yvette (her full name), was born in Richmond, Indiana. She grew up in Indianapolis, where she graduated from Broad Ripple High School. While a student at Broad Ripple, Carmen was selected to participate in the magnet school for the performing arts. After high school, Carmen served in the U.S. Army in Augsburg, Germany and worked for the National Security Agency in Fort Meade. Carmen is married to Barry Archer and they have five children: Sahira, Iman, Victoria, Amira and Barry II. She responded to a call into ministry in 1997 and recently relocated to Richmond in response to that call. She now serves on the ministerial staff of Bethel A.M.E. Church, where she ministers through song, dance and preaching. “This is basically who I am,” says Carmen, “I just like to say that it does not yet appear who I shall be through Christ Jesus, who continues to reveal.”

Stephanie Crumley Effinger, who served fifteen years as Earlham College’s Assistant to the President for Campus and Quaker Ministries, is ESR’s new Director of Field Education and Student Services. Stephanie grew up in the Reformed

Church of America and went occasionally with her Quaker grandparents to the unprogrammed Flushing Meeting (New York Yearly Meeting). She discovered programmed Friends as a first-year student at Earlham College when she attended All-College Meeting. After graduating from EC, Stephanie became an ESR student in 1977. It was then she joined West Richmond Meeting (Indiana Yearly Meeting) and eventually became a member of its ministry team. She later moved to Wilmington College where she served in campus ministry for four years. “Being at ESR,” said Stephanie, “enables me to follow my leading to serve more directly the Shalom of God by helping nurture and prepare leaders for the Religious Society of Friends and the wider Church. And to see my family in the evenings and weekends!”

Stephanie Ford comes to ESR as Visiting Assistant Professor in Christian Spirituality. While she roots herself in North Carolina, she grew up all over the United States. Likewise, though she calls herself a Baptist, she has been fed by Catholic, charismatic, Methodist, and Quaker streams.

In 1993, after several years of teaching English as a Foreign Language to college students, Stephanie felt a clear call to study spirituality at Baptist Seminary at Richmond, Virginia and then at the Catholic University of America. “I laugh,” she says, “when I think a Benedictine monk directed my seminar in Quaker spirituality; but in the end, it was a most fitting arrangement.” Stephanie’s doctoral dissertation is on the writing of Evelyn Underhill.

Stephanie likes to read, travel, watch romantic movies, dance (“not well,” she says), jog, and play the piano (“provided no one overhears!”). Her favorite person is “a little guy named Andrew, my 15-month-old nephew, who started day care the same day I started teaching at ESR! My friends would say that I don’t know how to tell jokes,” she continues, “but I love to laugh.”

Nancy Michaels, a native Hoosier and 1999 graduate of ESR, joins the staff as Director of Development and Alumni Relations. She follows Bridget Fitzwater’s brief, but effective stint in that position. Before becoming the Director of Development and Alumni Relations, Nancy

Continued on page 8.

Pete Seebert (ESR '73) writes that he is setting aside more time to write. He also has two grandchildren, one of which, Faith Ann (Shon's daughter), lives just north of Fountain City, Indiana.

Kenneth E. Hall (ESR '78) is the new Trinity-Brazos Area Minister for the Christian Church in the Southwest. He began this position in mid-July. His new address is 7854 Brook Meadow Lane, Fort Worth, Texas 76133. His phone is 817-423-2763.

Candida Palmer (ESR '84) died unexpectedly in Worcester, Massachusetts last February. Candida was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1926. She had an exciting life, was active in Friends concerns internationally as well as locally, and was a writer and painter. Candida was director of publications at ESR from 1983-1985.

Dave McCarty (ESR '92) is the new Director of Development at Mercy Medical Center in Sioux City, Iowa.

Karen Mendenhall (ESR '93) has moved from Indianapolis, where she was pastor at West Newton Friends Meeting, to Kellogg, Iowa. Karen is pastoring Center Friends Church, which is located between Newton and Kellogg. She is also working out of Drake University as an advocate for Head Start.

Robert Butera (ESR '93) is the founder of the YogaLife Center in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania and was certified by The Yoga Institute of Bombay, India in 1989. He has a Ph.D. in Yoga for the California, Institute of Integral Studies and has recently led a Yoga retreat at Pendle Hill.

Chris Parker (ESR '95) was a 1999 recipient of the "Pickett Endowment for Quaker Leadership." Chris, a member of Cambridge Monthly Meeting (New England Yearly Meeting), was given the grant to assist in his desire to create a service program offering full-time service placement with community organizations

Rob Hardies (attended ESR '96-97) reports that he is happy as intern minister at First Unitarian Church of Oakland (California). He graduated in May from the Starr King School for Ministry in Berkley and will soon be seeking his own church. His address is 450 Duboce #2, San Francisco, CA 94117.

Sabrina Falls (ESR '98) was recently featured in a story in *The Indianapolis Star*. "Ministers on the Mend" reported on a new network helping pastors "redefine their purpose after overwhelming pressures have caused them to leave the clergy." The work of "The Pastors Institute" was featured, as was a brief sketch of Sabrina's pastoral experiences. For more information, contact reporter Judith Cebula at judith.cebula@starnews.com

Linda Freimuth (ESR '98) writes that she and Rick moved to Penobscot, Maine (RR1, Box 187C, Penobscot, ME 04476) in July. Within a week Rick got a dream job as a finish carpenter and Linda became the 7th and 8th grade Language Arts/Social Studies teacher in the school there. She says that Majorie loves the tides, woods and her new friends. "We wake up every morning with amazement in our eyes—we're in Maine!"

Chris Buice (ESR '98) is giving a talk on "Exploring the Quaker and Universalist Connections," which will be the theme of this year's Universalist Convocation. This is the the annual national gathering of Unitarian-Universalists interested in Universalist theology and heritage. Chris, minister of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Spartanburg, South Carolina, will speak on "The Universalist and Quaker Connection." Other workshops will include: "Spiritual Directing from a Quaker Perspective" and "An Introduction to Pendle Hill, a Quaker Retreat Center." There will be an opportunity to participate in a silent Quaker worship service. The Universalist Convocation 2000 will be hosted at the Red Hill Universalist Church located near Clinton, North Carolina. The dates are November 3, 4, and 5, 2000.

The B.I.B.L.E.



Brent Bill

I had one particularly rough week this past summer. I'd traveled back in time, walked through the Red Sea, escaped Pharaoh's armies, experienced plagues of frogs and locusts and boils – and did it all accompanied by a group of elementary school kids. That all happened, of course, during Vacation Bible School.

I was in charge of the "Bible Adventure" station of our VBS. It was the room where kids came to participate in—in the publisher's words—"5 easy-to-

do active Bible stories." I don't know who they were supposed to be "easy to do" for. I guess it was the kids, because it wasn't me or my helpers. They were active, though. And through all those activities based on Bible stories the kids learned how faith helps us trust, love, serve, pray and live.

The stories, though familiar, became more alive to me in the activities. I hope they did for the kids, too. These tales told in the Bible are important ones and I am afraid that many of our young people, as well as adults (even those of us who consider ourselves spiritually sophisticated), don't know the Bible as well as they should.

I've had this fear for a long time. One of the dangers of growing up Quaker can be the danger of being biblically illiterate. We may know some of the major stories—the Nativity, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection—but are often woefully ignorant of the names of the books of the Bible or such key Scriptures as the 10 commandments, the 23rd Psalm and

the Lord's Prayer. Many of us, when we hear the names Peter, Paul and Mary think of some aging folk singers, not Bible characters.

This is too bad. The stories that the Bible teaches can help us on our journey of faith as we read how God works with people in all of life's situations, be they good or bad. Stories of the faithful and stumbling alike give us encouragement to press on in the life of faith. The poet and essayist Kathleen Norris, in *Amazing Grace*, writes that the Bible "sustains me in ways that no poem or novel could. I find no easy answers in the Bible, but only a holy simplicity. ... Like an exasperating but invaluable friend, the Bible keeps bringing me back to my senses."

While we need to be careful not to become the "Bible-olators" that Fox and Friends through the ages have warned against, we also need to remember that it was said that reading Fox's *Journal* was like reading the Bible. He knew its text so well that its phrases are woven throughout his life's story. Our own lives should be such tapestries.

Part of the reason for Fox's familiarity with scripture is his life-long acquaintance with it. He came from a family that encouraged the things of faith and as he grew older, he knew it was a place to look for help in finding spiritual rest.

Let us continue to seek God in scripture as well as the stillness of our souls. Let us renew in our hearts and minds a desire to reacquaint ourselves with this exasperating but invaluable friend. Maybe we'll then echo in our lives and spirits the words of the childhood chorus "The B.I.B.L.E., yes, that's the book for me."

Comings and Goings continued from page 6.

has been caseworker in a mental hospital, a police officer in Washington, DC., a paid volunteer coordinator, and a hospital chaplain.

Nancy's the mother of two daughters and the grandmother of Benjamin and Noah Feld who live in Connecticut. She says her "main man" is John Woolman, also known as "Wooly," a black and white longhaired cat.

Nancy is a one woman ecumenical movement, having been raised Methodist and then sojourning among Presbyterians and the United Church of Christ before becoming a convinced Friend. She is a member of the Oxford, Ohio Monthly Meeting (Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting).

Nancy believes that life is too serious to be serious all the time. "I hope Tom Mullen will sponsor me for membership in the Fellowship of Merry Christians," she says.

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Jay Marshall's book *The Ten Commandments and The Christian Community* book is being translated into Korean.

Nancy Bowen's "The Quest for the Historical Gebirah" will be published in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. "Gebirah" is a Hebrew word that is a title given to a few royal women in ancient Israel. The texts are: 1 Kings 11:19; 15:13; 2 Kings 10:13; 15:13; 2 Chronicles 15:16; Jeremiah 13:18; 29:2. Nancy's scholarly article examines how we know what we know from the Bible. There have been some very elaborate reconstructions of the role of the "gebirah" and her position and power within the monarchy. Nancy thinks those reconstructions may be true, but doesn't believe there's enough Biblical evidence to prove them.

Phil Baisely wrote for the summer 2000 and winter 2001 editions *The Adult Friend* (George Fox Press) Sunday School curriculum. He also contributed a week of articles for *Reflecting God, Devotions for Daily Living*, a Nazarene publication

Lonnie Valentine worked with Hugh Barbour and Tom Hamm to produce an essay entitled "Social Concord and Discord in the Life and Ideas of the Society of Friends." It is in Volume Two of the book series *Re-*

search in Human Social Conflict and focuses on world religions. He also published "Western Ethical and Religious Traditions" for the *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*. Lonnie would be happy to send copies of either article to anyone who wants to read them.

Elizabeth Raid (current student) had a number of articles and editorials published in *The Kansan* and *The Wichita Eagle*. These were concerning her recent trip to Cuba. She also had an article featured in *The Mennonite*. Elizabeth is a second year student at ESR and the 2001 recipient of the Patrick Henry Scholarship.

Stephanie Ford co-authored the entries to the Psalms for *The Spiritual Formation Bible*, published by Upper Room/Zondervan in 1999.

Brent Bill was quoted in a *Los Angeles Times* front page story "New Economy' Deepens the Wealth Divide" by Mary Williams Walsh, Wednesday, April 19, 2000. He wrote "Full of Faith," feature story in *The Muncie Star Press*, January 1, 2000 special edition, "Let's Be Friends" 13 week adult Quakersim Sunday School curriculum for George Fox Press, and for a Fall 2000 issue of *The Christian Century*.

Stories of Transformation

by Nancy Michaels

Calling all ESR alumni/ae, grads or sojourners, faculty and staff: We are currently soliciting short (five pages, double spaced) essays from ESR folk, telling how their time at ESR changed them, either while they were here or since they left. The working title for this project is "Stories of Transformation." Depending on the number and quality of the submissions, we may try to publish them in some form. Most definitely, we will use them to spread the larger ESR Story which is ongoing and dynamic. We might devote a session at the ESR Tri-Annual Gathering (Memorial Day weekend, 2001—mark your calendars) for the sharing of stories.

We are looking for heartfelt examinations

of how your life, theology, and ministry were changed because you sojourned among us. This might include reminiscence of memorable people, a reflection on a course that affected your world view, or a story of how the community helped mold you into the person you are today. Perhaps you'll want to tell how you came to name and claim your gifts and how those gifts have grown or changed over time. This is an opportunity to let the creativity and inspiration flow.

Please send your "Story of Transformation" to: Nancy Michaels, Director of Development and Alumni Relations, Earlham School of Religion, 228 College Avenue, Richmond, IN 47374 or email at michana@earlham.edu

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What We're Reading



Stephanie Crumley Effinger recommends Henri Nouwen's *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*. "Henri, reflecting on Jesus' baptism, writes about having come 'to the inner conviction that the words, "You are my Beloved" revealed the most intimate truth about all human beings ..." Nouwen urges the reader to hear these words spoken to us by God, to let them 'reverberate in every corner of your being.'

He goes on to describe the other voices we are likely to pay attention to instead—ones that declare us no good, ugly, or worthless, and challenges us to move beyond the temptation to self-rejection and into acceptance of God's incredible love for us. 'You are my Beloved' are words my soul finds hard to take in, but wondrous at the moments when I can do so."

Nancy Bowen recommends Brian Keenan's *An Evil Cradling*. "I read this while I was in Ireland this summer. Brian Keenan is from Belfast and went to teach in Beirut, Lebanon where he was one of those kidnapped by Islamic fundamentalists. He was held for 4½ years. This book is his telling of his capture, imprisonment, and torture. It is an unbelievable book. He lived through circumstances I can't even imagine. It is both horrifying and hopeful. He tells of despair but also how he has hope and can be hopeful even in the midst of hell. I found what he has to say about humanity, both its evil and its grace, touching and profound. It is out of print in the U.S. but may be available at local libraries."

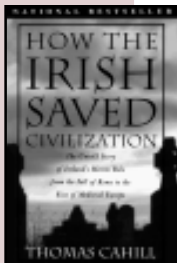
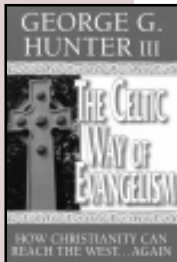
Phil Baisley offers two book selections: *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, by George C. Hunter III, and *Recovering the Past: Celtic and Roman Mission*, by John Finney. "These two books have had a profound effect on my thinking this year. Both authors, one American, one British, contend that confrontational evangelism, while well-suited to western thought from the Enlightenment through the modern era, has little relevance in today's post-modern, post-Christian culture. They propose a community-based model which they derive

from the early Celtic missionary movements. These books have stimulated my thinking about how Quakers, programmed and un-programmed, approach the subject of outreach."

Jay Marshall recommends Thomas Cahill's *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. "It offers its own contribution to the question of why the Roman empire collapsed. In the wake of the Dark Ages which followed, Cahill describes Christianity's emergence in Ireland. He contends Christian leaders in Ireland played key roles in preserving sacred memories, traditions, and cultural skills such as reading and writing. Celtic Christianity eventually sent missionaries beyond its borders, helping revive Christian faith and practice across Europe. Most Celtic influence disappeared as older Roman practices were re-established. The book is a provocative read, leaving me to think that some extremely useful models of Christian faith may well be buried in Celtic history."

Stephanie Ford suggests reading Anne Lamott's *Traveling Mercies*. "This book, now available in paperback, is a refreshing self-revelation of a modern spiritual seeker who finds her way through drug addiction and grief to a lively faith. Because she rarely uses the spiritualetse of the typical church-goer, Lamott catches religious readers unawares with new perspectives on topics like grace and prayer. The book made me laugh, cry, hope, and long for God."

Brent Bill—*The Christ-Haunted Landscape: Faith and Doubt in Southern Fiction*, edited by Susan Ketchin. "The Christ Haunted Landscape is made up short biographies, stories and interviews about the imprint of 'old time religion' on the artistic vision of twelve contemporary writers from the American South. The South is that part of our country where, as Mary Brown Ward says, 'people talk about God the way they talk about the weather.' Larry Brown, Allan Gurganus, Clyde Edgerton, and Doris Betts are just some of these authors who write to make sense of a world both concrete and metaphysical' and who are on 'a pilgrimage to find the source of their faith as individuals and their strength as artists.'"



“Why Study the Bible?”

THE DEAN’S WORD

by Jay Marshall

While working on my doctorate in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, a new acquaintance asked me why a Quaker would bother earning an advanced degree in Biblical studies. The implication was that the Bible was not a document relevant to Friends.

That comment left me stunned, though perhaps it should not have. I know that the Bible played, and continues to play, differing roles in the various segments of the Religious Society of Friends.

What is God’s Written Word to some individuals is little more than an interesting literary work for others. The same book that is at once revered by some as the primary, if not sole, source of inspiration and truth is condemned by others as a book which perpetuates oppression and intolerance.

Without doubt, the Bible is differently perceived and received by those who encounter it. Though we may think this is yet another witness to Quaker peculiarity, I am certain that this range of responses to the Bible is not unique to the small group of people who lay claim to the name of Friends.

As a product of a North Carolina Yearly Meeting (FUM) background, the Bible always occupied a prominent place in our worship and personal devotion (even if that simply meant the coffee table or prominent book case!) I was taught that this book was an important one, whether I acknowledged its wisdom or not. It was Truth seeking me out as well as waiting to be known. Through those early years of Sunday School and sermons, little by little, the Bible infiltrated the person I was becoming. Of course, the time came when I questioned all I had been taught. Some of it I have tossed aside for good, while a portion has proven worthy of remaining in the fold.

I recall how liberating it was to learn that the formation of the Bible occurred over time, centuries in fact, instead of appearing one day in a complete, leather bound, gold trimmed, red-letter edition. It was exhilarating to study ancient texts, discover families of interpretation, and realize the role that the faith community played in fashioning and

transmitting their sacred stories.

Seeing how the material was shaped over time made clear that the Bible’s content is a dialogue, not a monologue. It presents God in conversation, not in lecture mode. It narrates God revealing, and Israel and the early church listening and responding. It describes groups seeking to know the one who created them, and whose call they sensed.

Seen in that light, it became easy to acknowledge how material that is priceless revelation for some is genuinely limited in speaking to the experience of others. The language and perspectives shaping the Biblical message may be different from the language and perspectives of today’s reader.

That is not a new dilemma. While Isaiah prophesied from the seat of authority, clearly associated with the Temple, the prophet Micah was certain large cities overflowed with sin and were suspect in every way. Isaiah’s word from the Lord, by virtue of his position and perspective, was questionable to Micah—and the prophecies of both were canonized!

In my experience, the Bible as a static, one dimensional document ceased to speak to my condition years ago. However, when I came to know it as a window into the ongoing dialogue between God and people struggling to know and to understand God, it began nourishing my faith once more. I was thrilled to discover kindred spirits. Scripture regained a prominent place on my “must read” list. At that point, this became a book I wanted to study, regardless of its status on the Quaker Best Seller List.

That people in the Biblical stories are not perfect does not bother me. Neither am I. That the Bible’s portrayal of God’s character is not always consistent does not deter me from drawing upon it. That’s because the world still doesn’t make perfect sense within the categories I think God values, which



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ESR Calendar

THURSDAYS

Peace Studies Forum meets Thursdays during the academic year from 12 noon to 1:10 p.m. It consists of informal presentations and discussion and is jointly sponsored by Bethany and ESR. The topic for the fall semester is "Ministry at the Margins."

For further information, contact Lonnie Valentine at 1-800-432-1377 or valenlo@earlham.edu.

WRITING SERIES: NOVEMBER 11, JANUARY 20,
FEBRUARY 17, MARCH 17, APRIL 28

Good Writing: The Ministry of Writing Series, cosponsored by ESR and Quaker Hill Conference Center, has a variety of programs held at Quaker Hill. These include November 11, 2000 "Acts of Turning: Poetry" with Mary Brown; January 20, 2001 "Where In The World?" with Earl Conn; February 17, 2001 "Selling Your Stuff" with Holly Miller; March 17, 2001 "Writing for Youth" with Alan Garinger; and April 28, 2001 "The Art of Revision" with Barbara Bennett Mays.

All of these workshops go from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and are limited to 20 participants. The cost is \$40 each (\$25 for students) and includes all workshop materials, snacks and lunch. For further information, contact Quaker Hill Programs, 765-962-5741, e-mail quakrhil@infocom.com

NOVEMBER 12

D. Elton Trueblood's Centennial Celebration, with Richard Foster, will be Sunday, November 12, 2000. At 2:00 p.m. Foster will give a keynote address in Goddard Auditorium. A dinner will follow at 6:00 in Earlham College's Comstock Dining Room. For further details contact Patrick Nugent at 765-983-1413 or nugenpa@earlham.edu

MARCH 2001

Willson Lectures are set for March 2001 with Margery Post Abbott presenting, "Towards a Common Language for Spiritual Experience, Are We as Different as We Think?, Sorting Through Our Prejudices About 'those other' Friends, and Unity, Peaceful Coexistence, or Uneasy Truce: Future Relations Among Friends." For more information contact Anna Shirey at 1-800-432-1377 or shirean@earlham.edu.

MARCH 29-APRIL 1, 2001

Quakers in Pastoral Care & Counseling (Q.P.C.C.) Annual Conference meets March 29 - April 1, 2001 at Quaker Hill Conference Center in Richmond. This year's theme is "Gender and Spirituality." For further details check out the QPCC link off the ESR homepage or contact Anna Shirey at 1-800-432-137 or shirean@earlham.edu

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leaves me to explain modernity's own set of inconsistencies.

I am engaged in my own dialogue with God. Learning from the experiences of those spiritual ancestors who have participated in similar dialogues strengthens my own conversation and my contribution to the conversations of others. That leaves me with a clear response to the question of why a Quaker would pursue an advanced degree in Biblical studies.

Blessings, Jay